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New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 168 *(continued)*

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950)

The President: The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" is contained in document A/51/950 and has been distributed in the General Assembly Hall.

I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I am pleased to submit to the Assembly today my report "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform".

The reforms I am proposing are bold reforms. They are the most extensive and far-reaching reforms in the 52-year history of our Organization. Their aim is simple: to transform the Organization; to bring greater unity of purpose, greater coherence of efforts and greater agility in responding to an increasingly dynamic and complex world.

The establishment of the United Nations was an act of extraordinary foresight and creativity. Our founders, meeting in the aftermath of the Second World War and at the dawn of the era of colonial liberation, designed an instrument of common progress unique in human history.

In five decades the United Nations proved its worth. In its halls, virtually all nations and all peoples come together to discuss common agendas and to resolve common problems. The victims of aggression and of oppression come to the United Nations in search of justice, redress and relief.

There have been great achievements. Colonialism and apartheid are no more. We have worked to foster, restore and build peace in all corners of the globe. We have moved decisively forward in the promotion of social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

We have promoted democracy and international law as the pillars of peaceful relations among States. From air traffic control to the law of the sea, from the use of chemical weapons to the judging of war crimes, we have worked to establish clear norms and practices of international cooperation.

Faith in fundamental human rights has never been stronger. We have championed the advancement of women and brought relief and shelter to refugees. We have fought to ensure that the needs of children — the most vulnerable of all the world's people — come first. Today the world has at its service a United Nations with a proven record of achievement and a Charter of enduring validity.

The need for a common instrument of global service has never been greater. The global agenda has never been so varied, so pressing or so complex. Member States face

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a wide range of new and unprecedented threats and challenges. Many of them transcend borders. They are beyond the power of any single nation to address on its own — any single nation, however powerful.

The United Nations faces, therefore, unprecedented demands and opportunities. That is why an effective and efficient United Nations — a United Nations which is focused, coherent, responsive and cost-effective — is more needed than ever. When Member States turn to us — when they call on us to alleviate suffering and ensure peace — we must be ready.

However, the United Nations is not working as it should. Our Organization is slow to reflect changes in geopolitical realities.

Where we should have been flexible and adaptable, we have all too often been bureaucratic.

Where we should have reached across sectoral lines and institutional boundaries, we have stayed within rigid structures, working in isolation, with little or no coordination.

Where we should have been empowering managers, we have not made optimum use of our resources, either human or financial.

Where we should have been enabling the staff to fulfil their potential, we have shackled them with bureaucracy. We must liberate their skills and their capacities.

Now is the time for reform. The Organization needs it. The Member States of the Organization want it. Indeed, they are showing the way for change at the United Nations by rethinking their practices and adapting their policies, seeking out new efficiencies and value for money.

I was given the honour of being elected Secretary-General after 30 years of service with the United Nations, at Headquarters and in the field. If there is one thing that my experience has taught me, it is that, adequately funded and properly structured, this Organization of ours can and will carry out its mission on behalf of the world's peoples and Governments.

Since taking office, I have vigorously pursued the goal of bringing a culture of reform to the United Nations.

Today we take a momentous step forward. The Assembly now has before it a full, comprehensive programme of measures and recommendations for reforming and renewing the Organization. It encompasses all the reform measures and proposals initiated during my first six months in office. It takes us in many new directions as well. Allow me to review some of the highlights.

For the United Nations to pursue our core objectives, for us to carry out the tasks with which we are entrusted, we must first refine our leadership and our management.

Accordingly, a Senior Management Group will be formed that will function like a cabinet and help lead the process of change.

A Strategic Planning Unit will be established within my office to identify and analyse emerging global issues and trends.

Four Executive Committees, which I established in January to guide the Organization in its principal areas of work, will be strengthened.

I will also recommend to the General Assembly that the post of Deputy Secretary-General be established. A Deputy Secretary-General will assist me in leading this diverse and global Organization. The Deputy Secretary-General will be in charge of the Secretariat during my absence from Headquarters and will spearhead the Organization's efforts to raise funds for development. The Deputy Secretary-General will also ensure the coherence of the Organization's cross-sectoral activities.

The United Nations also needs streamlining. My reforms accomplish this in several ways: by proposing a negative-growth budget — this will be the first time in a generation that there has been negative growth in real terms in the United Nations budget; by eliminating 1,000 posts — with that reduction we will be 25 per cent below the figure of a decade ago; by reducing administrative costs by 33 per cent — these savings will be allocated to development; and by cutting back on documentation — by the end of this year, we will have reduced our use of paper by 30 per cent.

I also want to end the persistent state of near-bankruptcy in which the Organization has been living for far too long. Too many Member States are failing to discharge their treaty obligation to pay their contributions in full, on time and without preconditions. In response, I am proposing that Member States establish a revolving

credit fund, initially capitalized at a level of up to $1 billion through voluntary contributions or any other means that Member States may wish to suggest.

Let me be clear: assuring the Organization's financial viability is not only an essential part of the reform; it is a condition for the very success of reform.

Reform must enhance our ability to promote development and address the root causes of poverty and conflict. The grouping of United Nations funds and programmes engaged in development into a United Nations Development Group will foster consolidation and cooperation amongst them without compromising their distinctiveness or identity. This idea will be carried through to the field level as well, where all United Nations entities will function under one flag in a single United Nations House. I am proud to announce that the first such designation, effective immediately, will apply to the United Nations presence in South Africa.

Let us turn now to the question of financing for development. Put simply, we need more financial resources for development, whether from private-sector or governmental sources. I am therefore creating an Office for Development Financing. Raising such funds requires a concerted and full-time effort.

My report also proposes a "development dividend" in order to shift resources from administration to economic and social activities. Our projections are that at least $200 million could be made available by the year 2002. However, I am proposing that a down-payment be made in January 1998 from savings achieved from the current biennium's budget.

The programme of reform you, the members of the General Assembly, have in your hands will affect virtually every department and every activity of the United Nations. It contains proposals for increasing the speed with which we can deploy peacekeeping and other field operations. It focuses on improving our capacity for peace-building, advancing the disarmament agenda and strengthening the environmental dimension of United Nations activities. It proposes ways to combat the scourge of "uncivil society": criminals, drug pushers and terrorists. It reorients our public information activities so that the world's peoples better understand our goals, our role and our range of activities. It calls for simplified administrative procedures and for a thorough overhaul of human resources policies and practices.

It advocates major restructuring in several areas, including economic and social affairs, human rights and humanitarian affairs. The advancement of human rights needs to be integrated into all principal United Nations activities and programmes. We need to deal more effectively with complex humanitarian emergencies. Accordingly, a new Emergency Relief Coordination Office will be established to replace the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

The natural complement to these proposals would be certain changes of a more fundamental nature, which can be undertaken only by Member States. Several of these changes relate to the General Assembly. I have suggested that the General Assembly refocus its work on issues of highest priority and reduce the length of its sessions. I am proposing that the Assembly enact sunset provisions — specific time limits — for initiatives involving new organizational structures or major commitments of funds.

Perhaps most significantly, I urge the Assembly to consider adopting a new system of budgeting: a shift from input accounting to results-based budgeting. This approach, which many Member States already use at the national level, would give the Secretariat greater flexibility while maintaining strict accountability.

Finally, I have recommended that Member States consider establishing a commission to study the need for fundamental change in the system at large — the specialized agencies which are essential members of the United Nations family.

These are, in broad outline, the reforms that I am submitting for your consideration. I am confident of their soundness, I am convinced of their necessity and I am dedicated to their implementation.

We stand at the threshold of a new beginning for the United Nations.

(*Spoke in French*)

We are truly at the beginning of a new era for the United Nations. Resolved to participate in a new century, capable of adapting to a changing world environment and committed to the eternal values of its founding fathers, the United Nations will be able to realize with dignity the goal it has set itself: the essential pursuit of the common good.

The reforms I am proposing will enable the United Nations to do more, and to do better. They will enable us to seize the new opportunities now before us, and they will enable us to make the world Organization the unchallenged expression of the conscience of humanity in the service of humanity.

(*Spoke in English*)

Our aspiration with this reform plan, simply and immediately, is to transform the conception, quality and delivery of the services we provide. That is what you and the world demand of us. No less do we demand of ourselves. This is my pledge to you, and to the world: that starting today, we begin a quiet revolution in the United Nations.

In return, I ask of you, and of the world, that you judge us not only by the cuts we propose or by the structures we change. Judge us instead, and judge us rightly, by the relief and the refuge that we provide to the poor, the hungry, the sick and the threatened — the peoples of the world whom the United Nations exists to serve.

"The Earth is not ours", an African proverb teaches us; "it is a treasure we hold in trust for future generations". We today must ensure that we are worthy of that trust, and must make the United Nations once again the instrument of its fulfilment. We can and we will lay a new foundation of peace, progress and development.

This is the age of the United Nations. Unfettered by ideological conflict and empowered by technology and global prosperity, we can envision as never before the realization of our noble aims. We owe it to all succeeding generations that this moment of promise become a new beginning for all nations and peoples alike.

There is a light at the end of our century's dark and dangerous tunnel and it is brightened by the hopes and dreams of the world's peoples. The United Nations remains the one true and universal vessel for those dreams. Reinvigorated, reformed and recommitted, it can carry those dreams into the next millennium and make them reality.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): I stand in the name of the African Group, which I have the honour and the privilege to chair for the month of July, to convey our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our Secretary-General for submitting to this Assembly his measures and proposals for the reform the United Nations Organization.

It would, of course, be presumptuous on our part to comment at this time on the substance of the proposals, since we have just heard them. But from what we have heard, we have the distinct impression that the reform programme is indeed far-reaching and wide-ranging. We are particularly impressed that the Secretary-General is able to produce such a package barely six months after assuming his onerous responsibilities.

There is no one in this Assembly who can seriously question the need for reform of the United Nations. Indeed, for some time now, the reform process has become not only part of the daily life of this Organization, but also of ourselves as individuals, whether we are on the side of the Secretariat or on that of the intergovernmental machinery. Five working groups have so far been set up to deal with various aspects of the reform of our Organization. The overall aim is to make the Organization more efficient, relevant and effective; to be able to fulfil better its core principles and purposes of promoting peace and security, economic prosperity, social progress, humanitarian assistance and overall development; and also to deal with current and future challenges as we enter the new millennium. To achieve this, reform must be rooted in consensus on the role of the Organization as envisaged in the Charter and buttressed by agreement on how it should play this role and achieve those goals.

Unfortunately, it appears from the work done so far in the working groups that reform has different connotations for different States or groups of States. The resultant effect is that, apart from failure to make substantial progress in our reform efforts after so many months, we have also increasingly succeeded in generating much tension and mistrust among ourselves. We must endeavour to defuse this situation and focus on the essentials of the exercise, since reform amidst crisis is a sure recipe for failure.

It is within this context that we want to situate the bold and courageous initiatives which our reform-minded Secretary-General, like his predecessor, has undertaken to keep us focused on what we really need to do to restructure, equip and finance the Organization to enable it to do more with less and to obtain value for its money.

Already in March 1997, the Secretary-General had "outdoored" what he referred to as his "Track I" proposals for reform, involving those managerial initiatives and decisions which fall within his authority. We appreciate the fact that he has since taken further

measures to implement most of those proposals in a transparent manner. At the time of presenting his Track I proposals, the Secretary-General also gave an indication that he would unveil, by July 1997, further reform proposals which would incorporate more measures, also within his competence, but which would benefit from consultations with and guidance from Member States; as well as other proposals and recommendations in respect of the more fundamental issues that could only be decided by Governments. In submitting these further proposals today, the Secretary-General has been true to his word and has underscored his commitment to reforming an Organization which we all agree is in need of reform.

The United Nations stands at a crossroads between the end of the cold war and the start of a new era of constructive peace; between the end of a century and the promise and prospects of a new millennium. United Nations reform should therefore serve as a tool to help us cope better with the choices the world community must make at this crucial time. In this connection, we welcome the fact that the Secretary-General's proposals cover the four crucial sectors of United Nations activities: development cooperation; peace and security; economic, social and environmental affairs; and humanitarian activity. We are of the view that such a comprehensive package deserves the most careful study, analysis, reflection and appraisal, at a high political level, with a view to arriving at a consensus that would enable the package to dovetail smoothly into the intergovernmental reform process and hopefully arrest the recent trends to undermine the integrity of the Organization and erode its *raison d'être*.

It is incumbent upon all Member States to respond to the Secretary-General's initiative by providing him with clear and coherent policy guidance in the implementation of the reform proposals. And we propose that this be done timeously in order not to lose the momentum. We are also of the view that the General Assembly should focus on the goal and direction of the reform and avoid any temptation to micro-manage the process.

For us as developing countries, and particularly those of us in Africa, the yardstick for evaluating the reform proposals will be the extent to which the programme satisfies our priorities and concerns for a more secure, prosperous and just world, where the needs of one are the concern of all.

We do not see the reform process as an issue of confrontation between the Secretariat on the one hand and Member States on the other, or between one group of States and another. We see it as an issue of common interest and concern to all mankind. It therefore calls for the exercise of a collective political will backed by adequate, timely and unconditional financial support in a spirit of partnership that is unquestionable. It also calls for the mobilization of support from civil society for the United Nations and its reform efforts.

I thank you, Sir, on behalf of the African Group, for this opportunity to make these preliminary remarks on the Secretary-General's submission. Once again we express our gratitude, appreciation and support for the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to bring us thus far on the vital issue of reform. We look forward to sharing his vision as we work together to build an Organization that truly measures up to the fundamental purposes and principles of its Charter.

Mr. Wolzfeld (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia have associated themselves with this statement, as has Liechtenstein.

Allow me at the outset, Sir, to convey our appreciation to you for the action you have taken since the beginning of your term of office and which has led you today to present to the General Assembly these important and wide-ranging proposals for the reform of the United Nations.

The European Union is an enthusiastic supporter of the reform of the United Nations. The difficult but necessary exercise we are embarking upon will allow us to test the credibility and the determination of both the Organization and its Member States regarding their capacity adequately to respond to the questions we are facing in the areas mentioned by the Secretary-General.

In the view of the European Union, the reform process is not about cost-cutting but about enabling the United Nations to play a fully effective role in meeting its obligations and carrying out its tasks. Its objective should be to contribute significantly to giving the United Nations greater unity of purpose and greater flexibility of response. The European Union is fully committed to an exercise that will make our Organization more efficient, more present and more in tune with existing trends in international relations.

A successful reform requires not only rationalization and the streamlining of operations, but also the strengthening of the Organization on the basis of sound and predictable financial resources. If the United Nations is to respond adequately to the challenges of the twenty-first century, the reform process should lead to the building of a world forum that provides effective leadership, and should concurrently make the Organization more efficient, transparent, accountable and reliable.

The United Nations represents, in our view, an important instrument of support for Governments in their development process. The European Union presented a number of ideas and proposals in the economic and social field in October 1996 and in January 1997, and it has actively contributed in the discussions on these issues in the context of the Agenda for Development. We note therefore with appreciation that the proposals by the Secretary-General deal thoroughly with questions pertaining to development, humanitarian activities and human rights. If the United Nations is to function more effectively in these fields, it must strengthen the efficiency of its offices and of its operational framework, give them more coherence and ensure genuine coordination at all levels.

By combining integrated, well-managed and efficient services at the national level with a common programming framework, the Organization will not only enhance its impact on the policies pursued by Governments, but it will also have a greater influence on the agendas and priorities of other actors in the development field.

To be effective, reform will also have to be implemented at the intergovernmental level. Streamlining the United Nations consultative machinery, including through a reinforcement of the Economic and Social Council, is an important element of this reform, which should also be translated at the Secretariat level, which is largely dedicated to serving the intergovernmental process.

The European Union will study carefully the various proposals contained in the document that was submitted to us today. We will offer our substantive comments on the reform proposals during the general debate of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Marc Forné Molné, President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Forné Molné (Andorra) *(spoke in Catalan; English text furnished by the delegation):* When we take the time to analyse the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, we realize that the founding fathers and mothers of the United Nations were very careful to establish a system of sovereign equality of States in the supreme organ of our Organization, the General Assembly. At the same time, they tried to give the Security Council a balance of powers to highlight the importance of existing forces in a world of economic, geographical and political imbalances. Over more than 50 years, some better, some worse, the United Nations has functioned, has grown, has become established and has become an indispensable Organization.

Today its Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, responding to the will of Member States to safeguard and strengthen the United Nations, has introduced to us very diligently his proposals for United Nations reform. I can guarantee the Secretary-General that I have listened to his words with avid interest and that I will not fail to bring to him the Andorran contribution in the course of the general debate of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

My goal today is to point out the importance that small States will have — those same States to which in 1945 one was careful to give sovereign and equal voices and voting powers in the General Assembly — in order for the reform process fostered by the Secretary-General since the beginning of his mandate to go forward. At the United Nations, small States are the majority. With us, reform will progress. The biggest and most powerful States must not fear the abundance of the small. If reform were to lead to imbalances in the founding principles of the United Nations, our Organization would cease to be universal, and it would therefore cease in its function as the flag of the future. Without the big States, reform is not possible. Without the small States the reform will be half a reform.

At the practical level, the contribution of small States deserves to be taken into consideration. As a matter of fact, small States, generally, in spite of their presence everywhere, have a tendency to concentrate their efforts at the United Nations in particular areas in which they become experts. Andorra, for example, proposed to the Group of Western European and other

States that it computerize its archives, a task that our Mission to the United Nations, with the help of the National Centre for Informatics, is carrying out right now. These efforts at computerization fit very well into the goals of immediate managerial changes that the Secretary-General proposed as a first phase on March 17 of this year. We also salute the efforts of the Ambassador of Pakistan for increased computerization of the United Nations.

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Secretary-General, on your proposals of 17 March for immediate managerial change, to reduce the budget and administrative costs, to integrate at the level of countries, to establish a code of conduct and to reorient the Department of Public Information, among others. Your efforts to divulge the works of the United Nations will foster an enthusiasm at the base of world population that will guarantee the success of the reform, which deserves all the recognition of the international community.

Today the Secretary-General has introduced to us the second phase for the reform of the United Nations, which is closely linked to the question of development. Last 3 July in Geneva, Mr. Kofi Annan defined development as a pillar of peace, a foundation of stability and a powerful force for preventive diplomacy and preventive action. Andorra believes that this human development will not take place without youth. The reform of the United Nations must bring our Organization close to youth, so that it becomes involved in taking advantage of the efficiency dividends that are the fruit of the same process. My country pointed this out at the Social Summit in 1995 with the introduction of a specific commitment in the Copenhagen Declaration; in New York during all these years; in Vienna at the closing session of the World Youth Forum, attended by our Ambassador in December 1996; and at the Earth summit last month in this same Hall. It is fair that I do so again today.

The Secretary-General states that reform is a process, not an event. In this process he will be able to count on Andorra. In this process he will be helped by small States. This process will have to have the backing of youth if it is to be durable, global and true.

The President: I thank the President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra for this statement.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, President of the Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. Mungra (Suriname): It is indeed an honour for me, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, to acknowledge and express appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his staff in preparing the document entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", which was presented earlier in this meeting by the Secretary-General.

We will forward the document launched this morning to our respective capitals for its consideration and thorough study. We expect preliminary comments to be presented in the course of the general debate of the forthcoming fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his presentation of the report containing his proposals for the second phase of reforms. This offers all of us an excellent opportunity to continue the dialogue on the reform process, which began when Mr. Kofi Annan first assumed his duties as Secretary-General. We expect the dialogue to continue in a spirit of partnership and cooperation between the Secretariat and the Member States.

As expected, the report turned out to be rather voluminous, and for obvious reasons I have not yet had an opportunity to read it. It covers a broad spectrum of issues, many of which have substantive importance for the future of the United Nations. We note the greater focus on tasks in the spheres of peace-building, socio-economic development, ensuring human rights and crime prevention. The humanitarian sector is becoming one of the cornerstones of the new United Nations, and it is important to preserve and develop the active capability that has been built up here in the short time since the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly. The importance of multilateral disarmament questions is growing, and the United Nations is called upon to foster more actively the resolution of such questions while taking all factors into account.

It is clear that an in-depth, comprehensive analysis, both in New York Missions and in capitals, is necessary. The success of reforms will depend on the extent to which their specific components and orientation are supported by the Member States. We expect the reforms

to make the Organization more mobile and capable of responding quickly, and the answer will not be simply, as in the past, the establishment of new structures and managerial posts.

It is also clear that no reforms can strengthen the United Nations if all Member States do not recognize their international obligations vis-à-vis the Organization and if they do not fulfil them unconditionally.

It is our understanding that after the Member States study the report and determine their positions, an appropriate mechanism for the practical consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals will be set up.

At that time, we will give a more detailed response to the report. We are prepared, jointly with all other delegations and with our Secretariat colleagues, to advance the nascent reforms in the interest and for the benefit of all. Our common responsibility is to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations as it faces the challenges of today's world. We hope that this report will give rise to dialogue and cooperation towards achieving these goals.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): This brief statement is delivered on behalf of Canada and Australia, as well as of New Zealand.

In the coming weeks we will carefully study the proposals which have been put before us this morning. Our considered views will be presented by our respective ministers at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

At this stage, Canada, Australia and New Zealand would like to join others in warmly welcoming the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations. While many of the measures announced today must ultimately be approved by the Member States, the Secretary-General is uniquely placed to invigorate our discussions with new ideas and fresh insights.

We believe that bold and innovative measures are needed to prepare the Organization for the twenty-first century. Our Governments are concerned to see a more effective and more efficient United Nations. We wish to see better, more targeted programmes. There is a need to redistribute resources to priority areas and away from administration and lower priorities. We are not interested in mere cost-cutting and we most emphatically disagree with suggestions which would leave the United Nations with a diminished role in the world.

We believe that the initial reforms presented to us in February and March, and today's second-track proposals, open a critical window of opportunity for the Organization to seriously address long-overdue reforms, particularly significant problems in the economic and social sectors and management reform. We hope that this package will deliver the concrete changes necessary to revive and enhance the perception of the United Nations in the global system.

Such reform will not be painless, as we know from our own experiences, but without it the United Nations will risk sliding into increasing irrelevance. We are determined therefore to support necessary reforms, and to that end have each already sought to contribute enthusiastically and constructively to the reform process. As the Secretary-General himself has said, reform is a process, not an event. The package of proposals before us will lay the foundation for further measures in the future.

Canada, Australia and New Zealand believe that the Secretary-General's package must not be split up for consideration and possible dismemberment by different bodies or organs of the United Nations. We support, therefore, consideration of the entire package by the General Assembly in plenary meeting at the fifty-second session, and for the General Assembly to decide on follow-up action and implementation in plenary meeting.

Canada, Australia and New Zealand have high expectations of this reform process.

It is fitting, Mr. President, that these proposals have been introduced at this time, given the commitment and effort which you have devoted to the United Nations during your tenure of office. We are committed to the goal of a more effective, relevant and influential United Nations.

Mr. Bjørn Lian (Norway): The Secretary-General has just presented us with a report that contains wide-ranging and bold proposals for reform of the United Nations, indeed for what he called a "quiet revolution". While we will come back with further comments after careful study, I wish today to warmly welcome this new, important initiative for renewal of this Organization.

Allow me to recall that the Nordic countries earlier this year presented a comprehensive report suggesting reform of the economic and social areas of cooperation in the United Nations. This, of course, is an area of key importance to the developing world. We are therefore pleased that the Secretary-General is building on and taking further the proposals in his first reform package, of March this year. These are important steps which will allow us to achieve even greater impact for United Nations operational activities.

It augurs well for our overall efforts to reform the United Nations that the General Assembly's Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System achieved consensus a few days ago on a large number of measures for reform of the General Assembly and the Secretariat.

The Secretary-General's report and the report of the Working Group are mutually supportive, and I am convinced that taken together they will enable the United Nations to take decisive steps to strengthen the organization. That is what Member States and the United Nations have now demonstrated that they want.

In presenting his comprehensive reform proposals today, the Secretary-General, only six months into his term of office, has shown genuine leadership. It is now up to us, the Member States, to give him the support he so clearly deserves.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): The members of the Asian Group listened with interest to the Secretary-General's introduction and summary presentation of his proposed reform package, set out in document A/51/950 under agenda item 168, entitled "United Nations reform: measures and proposals". We appreciate his courtesy in making this introduction.

You may rest assured, Mr. President, that the States members of the Asian Group will give the report of the Secretary-General due attention by forwarding it to their respective capitals for careful consideration, study and analysis, in the hope that during the general debate at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly this autumn individual delegations and groups will be able to articulate their respective positions on the report.

Mr. Owada (Japan): I should like on behalf of the delegation of Japan to join previous speakers in expressing our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for personally presenting his plan for a comprehensive and overarching package of United Nations reforms.

Japan attaches great importance to the reform of the United Nations in the recognition that the Organization must adapt to the new international situation as we look forward to the twenty-first century. We believe it is necessary to promote reforms in a balanced way in the areas of peace and security and development, as well as in the administrative and financial areas, so as to ensure that the United Nations can discharge its responsibilities in a more effective, relevant and efficient manner.

Indeed, whether or not the Organization can play an effective role in the years ahead will depend on the success of our reform effort. My delegation deeply appreciates the leadership and commitment to reform that the Secretary-General has shown in this regard and hopes that today's announcement on reforms will generate greater momentum in the overall process of United Nations reforms.

The Secretary-General's reform programmes and proposals that are presented to us today touch upon a wide range of United Nations endeavours which require our careful scrutiny. Once we have studied them in detail, my delegation looks forward to participating in the forthcoming deliberations on them. At this time, I should like to present some preliminary remarks based on the presentation the Secretary-General offered today.

In the areas of peace and security, my delegation welcomes the emphasis which the Secretary-General places on strengthening the role of the United Nations in providing global services to international peace and security, such as the rapid reaction capability of peacekeeping operations, as well as on preventive action and post-conflict peace-building.

With regard to economic and social development, we are gratified to note that the Secretary-General is focusing attention on development issues as one of the most important areas of the United Nations endeavour and hope that the United Nations will further contribute to the promotion of the new development strategy based upon global partnership.

Japan has been promoting the concept of reinvestment of savings -- that is, the reallocation of savings to development programmes -- and thus my delegation strongly supports the Secretary-General's proposal in this regard. Moreover, we agree with the

thrust of the Secretary-General's reform efforts to further integrate the activities of the various funds and programmes, both at Headquarters and at the field level.

As has often been pointed out, if the United Nations is to respond promptly and effectively to the grave humanitarian crises that have been arising with increasing frequency in recent years, greater coordination among its various humanitarian assistance activities is essential. From this point of view, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen coordination among humanitarian assistance activities. As for the concrete measures that he has proposed, Japan would like to study the proposal in detail.

As I indicated at the outset, my delegation intends to examine carefully the reform proposals presented today, together with the 1998-1999 revised budget estimates, which will be forthcoming in the near future. My delegation is ready to actively participate in the discussion from the viewpoint of how these proposals, presented in the form of a comprehensive reform package, will contribute to the common goal of ours: the goal of strengthening the functions of the United Nations, revitalizing its activities and achieving a cost-effective United Nations.

Mr. Bohaievs'ky (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and his team of reformers who prepared the report with the proposals for the second track of the United Nations reform.

The United Nations remains an irreplaceable institution. This is the reason why we have greeted with appreciation and encouragement all attempts to enhance its efficiency and update the Organization's structures. The recent successful completion of the work of the Open-Ended High-Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System and the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development is an important event in the life of the United Nations that will have a positive impact on its deliberations.

The same magnitude, in the view of our delegation, is reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, presented today for our attention and consideration. As we understand it, this document requires a comprehensive and thorough analysis with a view to achieving broad support for its elements.

Being committed to the idea of adapting the United Nations to the new realities and challenges of today's world, Ukraine is prepared, as always, to make its instrumental contribution to the future process of reforms in this world Organization. We can succeed if all of us are guided by reason, political will, determination and a consensus approach in our efforts to see a new and more efficient United Nations.

In due time, Ukraine will have an opportunity to present in detail its assessment of the substance of the Secretary-General's report. At this moment, we wish to support the views that a discussion of the report should be the substance of the general debate of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): When the Secretary-General announced his initial reform blueprint in March, my delegation welcomed it wholeheartedly. Today, we are very pleased to see the Secretary-General's carefully considered Track II proposals introduced in the General Assembly. Of course, having received the full report only today, like other delegations we will need to examine the details carefully.

In making these proposals, the Secretary-General has taken a very significant step towards the kind of structural reform that will enable the United Nations of today and the future to do more for the world's people, to do it better and to do it for less. We commend him for his initiatives thus far and pledge our full support to making the process of reform at the United Nations an effective one.

We are fully aware that the Secretary-General cannot achieve all of the proposed reforms alone. Many central elements of the proposal require action by all of the Member States to be implemented. Both the Secretariat and the Member States share joint responsibility for the direction of the reform process as a whole. Cooperation will be crucial if efforts to strengthen the United Nations are to bear fruit.

In this connection, my delegation proposes that we seize the opportunity today to make a firm statement of our collective resolve to continue down the reform path. I urge the General Assembly to take action on this very day on President Razali's proposal to establish an ad hoc committee of the whole to consider the Secretary-General's proposals. The committee of the whole

represents the next logical step in the continuing process of reform.

Today's announcements are tangible expressions of the culture of reform that has been vigorously developing here at the United Nations and in Member States over the past few years. Let us make it a priority to build on this good start today by working together for an Organization that can better serve all of our people in the years ahead.

The President: As President of the General Assembly, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for providing us with his report. The report contains qualitative and extensive reform measures and proposals that are designed to enable our Organization to meet the challenges ahead. I wish to congratulate the Secretary-General and his staff and the Executive Coordinator for Reform for presenting this report within six months of the Secretary-General's tenure in office.

When you assumed office, Mr. Secretary-General, we spoke of building an enduring partnership within the membership and the Secretariat. In that context, we spoke of working closely to make the United Nations remain relevant to the needs of the peoples of the world. Today you have made specific proposals to this Organization underlining greater unity of purpose, greater coherence and a greater ability to deliver. You have also challenged the Member State to do their share so that together we can revitalize the Organization to achieve the purposes outlined in the Charter. I wish to use this occasion to appeal to all Member States seriously to study these proposals so that we can ensure that the United Nations will be fully equipped and prepared to meet the challenges ahead. I hope that in studying these proposals, Member States will keep an open mind. As we all know, it is easy to criticize, but much more difficult to be constructive. These are important proposals which I hope will not fall casualty to stereotyped processes. Above all, the proposals, I hope, will not prove to be casualties to tussles to benefit only one or two groups.

The United Nations must undergo change, but the changes that it must undergo must benefit all — all of the Governments, not just some Governments — and more importantly, they must benefit the peoples of the world, as promised in the Charter. Only through change of this fashion can we all serve our collective needs and truly call the United Nations a universal House.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 168.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.